

U. S. Department of Justice

(MATERIAL MUST NOT BE REMOVED FROM OR ADDED TO THIS FILE)

FEDERAL BUREAU

of

INVESTIGATION

Bureau File NumberSee also Nos.

Declassification
 authority derived from
 FBI Automatic
 Declassification Guide,
 issued May 24, 2007

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CLASSIFICATION NO.

157-8256

Serials

Volume Number

157-8268

4410

F B I

Date: 10/12/67

Transmit the following in _____
(Type in plaintext or code)Via AIRTEL _____
(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-8266) (C)

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL,
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

Re Jackson airtel to Bureau, 10/7/67, and
Bureau airtel to Jackson, 10/11/67.

Enclosed for the Bureau are three copies of
a self-explanatory letter from the Office of Economic
Opportunity, Atlanta, Georgia, which were inadvertently
not enclosed with referenced Jackson airtel.

A letter is being directed to the Office of
Economic Opportunity, Atlanta, Georgia, advising them
that the requested information has been disseminated
to the Office of Economic Opportunity at the Seat of
Government.

3 - Bureau (Encls. 3)
① - Jackson (157-8266)
LCB/bls *bls*
(4)

Cons. 1-15-68
ph

157-8266-³⁰~~29~~
Searched _____
Serialized *hem*
Indexed *hem*
Filed *hem*

Approved: *[Signature]* Sent _____ M Per _____
Special Agent in Charge

F B I

Date: 10/11/67

Transmit the following in _____
(Type in plaintext or code)Via Airtel _____
(Priority)

To: SAC, Jackson (157-8266)

✓ From: Director, FBI

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

Reurairtel dated 10/7/67.

Copies of the enclosure to referenced communication were not received at the Bureau. They should be forwarded by return airtel. For your information, copies of letterhead memoranda dated 8/8/67 and 8/21/67 concerning captioned matter have been disseminated to the Office of Economic Opportunity at the Seat of Government. You should so inform the regional office of the Office of Economic Opportunity at Atlanta, Georgia.

157-8266-29

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
OCT 11 1967	
FBI - Jackson	

Butler

(with file)

Sent Via _____ M Per _____



In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Post Office Box 1450
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

October 12, 1967

Mr. J. M. Merrell, Jr.
Deputy Regional Director
Office of Economic Opportunity
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. Merrell,

Reference is made to my letter dated October 7, 1967.

This office has been advised by our Federal Bureau of Investigation Headquarters in Washington, D.C., that the investigative reports relative to the fire at the Headstart Center in Natchez, Mississippi, on August 1, 1967, were previously disseminated to the Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington, D.C.

It is suggested that you communicate with your headquarters for the purpose of obtaining these investigative reports.

Very truly yours,

Roy K. Moore
Special Agent in Charge

2 - Addressee
① - Jackson (157-8266)

LCB/bls *bls*

(3)

Searched

Serialized

Indexed

Filed

157-8266-78

F B I

Date: 10/7/67

Transmit the following in _____
(Type in plaintext or code)Via AIRTEL _____
(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-8266) (C)

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL,
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

Re Jackson airtels and LHMs to Bureau,
8/8/67, and 8/21/67.

Enclosed for the Bureau are three copies of
a self-explanatory letter ^{156M} for the Office of Economic
Opportunity, Atlanta, Georgia.

Results of Jackson investigation in instant
case is not being disseminated by Jackson to the Office
of Economic Opportunity (OEO), Atlanta, without specific
Bureau authority. If not already done, the Bureau may
desire to disseminate pertinent information to OEO either
in Washington, D.C., or directly to the regional office
in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. J. M. MERRELL, JR., Deputy Regional Director,
OEO, Atlanta, is being advised that his request is being
forwarded to the FBI Headquarters inasmuch as the requested
information could have already been disseminated at
Headquarters level.

No further action being taken by Jackson, UACB.

3 - Bureau (Encls. 3)
1 - Jackson (157-8266)
LCB/bls *bls*
(4) *JAB*

157-8266-27

Searched	_____
Serialized	<i>Co</i>
Indexed	_____
Filed	<i>Co</i>

Approved: _____ Sent _____ M Per _____
Special Agent in Charge



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Post Office Box 1450

Jackson, Mississippi 39205

October 7, 1967

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

Mr. J. M. Merrell, Jr.
Deputy Regional Director
Office of Economic Opportunity
Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. Merrell

Reference is made to your letter dated October 3,
1967.

Your request for an investigative report relative
to a fire at a Headstart Center in Natchez, Mississippi,
on August 1, 1967, has been forwarded to our Federal Bureau
of Investigation Headquarters at Washington, D.C., inasmuch
as the requested information could have already been
disseminated to the Office of Economic Opportunity at
Washington, D.C.

Very Truly Yours,

Roy K. Moore
Special Agent in Charge

2 - Addressee

1 - Jackson (157-8266)

LCB/bls *bls*

(3)

157-8266-26

Searched	_____
Serialized	<i>cc</i> _____
Indexed	_____
Filed	<i>cc</i> _____

Post Office Box 1450
Jackson, Mississippi 39205
October 5, 1967

Honorable Robert E. Hauberg
United States Attorney
Southern District of Mississippi
Post Office Box 2091
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Attention: Joseph E. Brown, Jr.
Assistant United States Attorney

Dear Sir:

Re: JESSE PARIS
FRAUD AGAINST GOVERNMENT

On October 5, 1967, Special Agent George P. Gamblin discussed the facts of this case with Mr. Joseph E. Brown, Jr., Assistant United States Attorney, of your office.

Mr. Brown declined prosecution of Paris, stating it is almost impossible to show the Federal character of the funds involved.

It is to be noted from previous communications disseminated to your office that Paris is being prosecuted locally.

Very truly yours,

Roy K. Moore
Special Agent in Charge

2 - Addressee
② - Jackson
 (1 - 46-104)
 ① - 157-8266)

GPG:mif

(4)

mif

157-8266-25

Searched	_____
Serialized	_____ <i>cc</i>
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Filed	_____ <i>cc</i>

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

OCT 3 1967

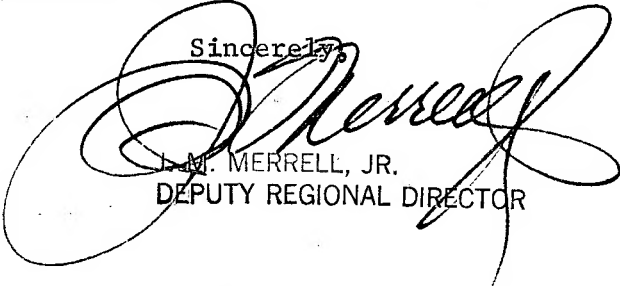
Mr. Roy K. Moore, Special Agent-in-Charge
Federal Bureau of Investigation
P. O. Box 1450
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Dear Mr. Moore:

On August 1, 1967, a fire at a Head Start Center in Natchez, Mississippi damaged the building and supplies inside to a considerable extent. The office is located at 629 Franklin Street in Natchez. We have the results of an investigation by Fire Chief A. E. Cameron, and understand that the Department of Justice also conducted a probe into the fire and the circumstances, although we do not have the results of this investigation.

We would appreciate having a copy of the investigation report on this fire from your office at the earliest possible date.

Sincerely,



J. M. MERRELL, JR.
DEPUTY REGIONAL DIRECTOR

157-8266-24

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
OCT 5 1967	
FBI-JACKSON	

[Handwritten initials]

September 1, 1967

AIRTEL

AIRMAIL

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-8266) (C)

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL,
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

Re Jackson airtel to the Bureau dated 8/21/67
with enclosed LHM concerning activities of
JESSE PARIS, former Executive Director of the
Adams - Jefferson County Improvement Corporation.

Enclosed herewith are eleven copies of an LHM
which sets forth circumstances surrounding the arrest of
JESSE PARIS by Adams County, Miss., Sheriff's Office on
8/31/67.

The Special Agent mentioned in the LHM is
SA FRED B. LAFFERTY, III.

One copy of the enclosed LHM is being furnished
to the United States Attorney, Jackson, Mississippi, and
two copies are being furnished to MIGp, Jackson, Mississippi.

3 - Bureau (Enc. 11)
① - Jackson (157-8266)
FBL/blw
(4)

blw

157-8266-23

Searched	_____
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Filed	_____ <i>Blc</i>

Job

Jackson, Mississippi

September 1, 1967

**FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM SCHOOL
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI, AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS**

On August 31, 1967, Odell Anders, Sheriff, Adams County, Mississippi, advised a Special Agent of the FBI that his office had arrested Jesse Paris at Natchez, Mississippi, on that date. He advised that Paris had been charged with three separate counts of forgery following the submission of three affidavits made out by Albert Lehmann, Marjorie Baroni, and Michel Dumas, all of whom are officers of the Adams - Jefferson County Improvement Corporation.

The first affidavit charged that Paris had fraudulently drawn a check on the Neighborhood Youth Corps Program with Britton & Koontz National Bank, Natchez, Mississippi, payable to School Distributing Company in the amount of \$2,655.45.

The second affidavit charged him with fraudulently drawing a check on the Neighborhood Youth Corps Program with Britton & Koontz National Bank to Southern Distributing Company in the amount of \$1,365.10.

11 - Bureau
1 - USA, Jackson
2 - MIGp, Jackson
① - Jackson (157-8266)
FBL/blw
(15)

blw

157-8266-22

Searched	_____
Serialized	_____ <i>PC</i>
Indexed	_____
Filed	_____ <i>PC</i>

ja

**FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM SCHOOL
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI, AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS**

The third affidavit charged Paris with fraudulently drawing a check on the Neighborhood Youth Corps Program with Britton & Koontz National Bank payable to Quality Office Supply Company in the amount of \$975.20.

Robert A. Bonds, County Judge, Adams County, Mississippi, placed a \$2,000 bond on Paris for each of the above mentioned counts returnable Monday, September 11, 1967, at 9:00 a.m.

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

F B I

Date: 8/21/67

Transmit the following in _____
(Type in plaintext or code)Via AIRTEL AIRMAIL
(Priority)

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-8266) (C)

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ,
MISS., 8/1/67
RM

Re Jackson teletype to Bureau dated 8/2/67, and
Jackson airtel to Bureau dated 8/8/67.

Enclosed herewith are eleven (11) copies of a
LHM which sets forth the statements made by ALBERT E.
LEHMANN, Chairman, Adams--Jefferson County, Miss., Improvement
Corporation in Fayette, Miss., on 8/18/67.

One copy of the enclosed LHM is being furnished to
the USA, Jackson, Miss., Secret Service, Jackson, Miss., and
two copies are being furnished to MIGp, Jackson, Miss.

The enclosed information is not being disseminated
to local authorities until the Bureau is afforded an opportunity
to thoroughly evaluate it.

3 - Bureau (Enc. 11)

② - Jackson

① - 157-8266)

(1 - 157-8293)

FBL/jls

(5)

Searched _____

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Indexed _____

Filed 21

157-8266-21

Approved: _____

Sent _____ M Per _____

Special Agent in Charge

JN 157-8266

Referenced teletype and airtel advised of the investigation of a fire in the Community Action Program School in Natchez, Miss., on 8/1/67. Witnesses and Executive Director, JESSIE PARIS, interviewed and no evidence of arson or forced entry discovered. PARIS advised he left building approximately 15 minutes prior to the discovery of the fire. Damage was estimated at \$400.

SA FRED B. LAFFERTY, III received the enclosed information from Mr. ALBERT E. LEHMANN in Fayette, Miss., on 8/18/67.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

In Reply, Please Refer to
File No.

August 21, 1967

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ,
MISSISSIPPI, AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

Albert E. Lehmann, Chairman, Adams--Jefferson County, Mississippi, Improvement Corporation, furnished the following background information on the activities of his organization; the acts of its former Executive Director, Jessie Paris, a Negro male; and about the fire which occurred in the Community Action Program School at Natchez, Mississippi, on August 1, 1967.

He advised that the Adams--Jefferson County, Mississippi, Improvement Corporation is a Community Action Group which was organized in June, 1966. Its offices are located at 715 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi. The corporation itself is comprised of 24 people, 12 being from Adams County and 12 being from Jefferson County. Of the 12 members from each county, six are white and six are colored. Mr. Lehmann continued that he is the present Chairman of this organization, and that Marjorie Baroni is the Secretary, and Michel Dumas is the Vice-Chairman. This corporation received a \$30,000 Program Development grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in either February or March, 1967. Upon receiving this grant, Mr. Lehmann and the other members of the corporation hired Jessie Paris as its Executive Director, and Mr. Daniel Weems as its Assistant Director. Mr. Paris answered an advertisement which the corporation had placed in the "Jackson-Clarion Ledger", advising that he was formerly employed by the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), and by the Mississippi Action for Progress (MAP). Mr. Lehmann continued that Paris officially began his duties on April 2, 1967, and that it was decided that in writing checks on the corporation, both he and Lehmann had to sign them.

11-Bureau

1-USA, Jackson

1-Secret Service, Jackson

2-MIGp, Jackson

②-Jackson (1-157-8266) (1-157-8293)

FBL:jls(17)

Searched

Serialized

Indexed

Filed

157-8266-20

BC

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FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ
MISSISSIPPI, AUGUST 1, 1967

Mr. Lehmann then advised that the first program which his corporation organized was the Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) which began in June, 1967. Mr. Bob Lee Williams, a Negro male, was appointed President of this group and Mrs. Patricia Washington, a Negro female, was appointed Bookkeeper. Under the NYC Program, both Jessie Paris and Bob Lee Williams had to sign all checks. To date 150 school dropouts have been hired at \$37.50 a week.

Mr. Lehmann continued that the next organization to be initiated under the Adams--Jefferson County Improvement Corporation was the Headstart Program. This program officially began in July, 1967. Doctor Robert Gentry, a professor from the University of Oklahoma, and a consultant for the OEO, came to Natchez to assist in drawing a proposal which was submitted to the OEO Headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 8, 1967. This proposal was officially approved on June 1, 1967, and the Headstart Program received a \$622,624 grant to be received in three equal payments. To date Mr. Lehmann advised that they have received one-third of the total amount of this grant.

The Screening Committee then hired Mamie Lee Mazique, Negro female, as Executive Director; Melonie Gouset, white female, as Director in Charge of Psychological Services; Charleen Gostley, white female, as Director of Social Services; and Martha Robinson, Negro female, as Business Manager. Mr. Lehmann advised that prior to Mrs. Mazique beginning her official duties, she attended a meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Boston, Massachusetts. While she was gone, Jessie Paris began to hire additional employees and buy necessary items for the establishment of the Headstart Program. It was later determined that Paris overhired and wrote checks on companies that have not been able to be located. Lehmann reiterated that under the NYC Program both Paris and Bob Lee Williams had to sign all checks. In order to obtain money for the Headstart Program, Paris borrowed \$7,000 from the NYC funds,

**FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ,
MISSISSIPPI, AUGUST 1, 1967**

as at that time the Headstart grant had not been received. In auditing the Headstart Program books, it was determined that Paris wrote six separate checks signed Jessie Paris and Bob Lee Williams. It was determined that three of these checks were justified in paying for repairs of the new office building at 517 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi. This was the building in which a fire was discovered on August 1, 1967. The three additional checks were made out to the School Distributing Company in the amount of \$2,655.45, endorsed by George Mitchell; School Distributing Company in the amount of \$1,365.10, endorsed Fred Thomas; and Quality Supply Company in the amount of \$975.20, endorsed J. T. Black. To date no invoices or goods for these three checks have been located. Upon confronting Bob Lee Williams with these checks, he informed Lehmann that he did not sign them. Patricia Washington, the Bookkeeper to the NYC Program, subsequently told Lehmann that she was the individual who signed Williams' name to these checks at Mr. Paris' "request and insistence". She further advised that at the time she signed these checks in Mr. Williams' name, there were invoices in the office.

Mr. Daniel Weems, who is now the acting Director of the Adams--Jefferson County Improvement Corporation, subsequently determined that George Mitchell, the endorser of the School Distributing check, is a stock broker in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Mr. Lehmann then stated that he was aware that Jessie Paris was in the office of the Headstart Program on the evening of the previously mentioned fire. He theorized that Paris possibly set fire to the building in order to destroy the record books. In this way it could not be proved that invoices or goods were not received for the three checks that he had previously written and which he persuaded Patricia Washington to sign in Bob Lee Williams' name.

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ,
MISSISSIPPI, AUGUST 1, 1967

Paris subsequently resigned and now has been re-hired by MAP in Jackson, Mississippi.

Mr. Lehmann finally advised that although he believed that the OEO grant lost its federal character upon being received by the Adams--Jefferson County Improvement Corporation, he felt that this matter should be brought to the attention of appropriate federal authorities.

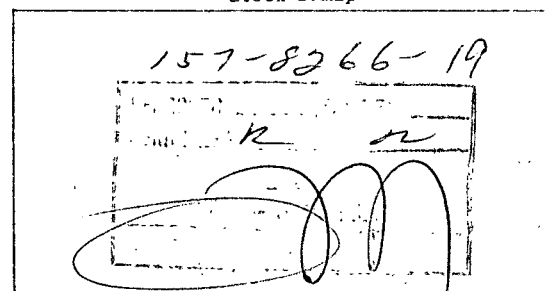
This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

4*

Date received 8/2/67	Received from (name or symbol number) <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	Received by SA BENJAMIN F. GRAVES
Method of delivery (check appropriate blocks) <input type="checkbox"/> in person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> by telephone <input type="checkbox"/> by mail <input type="checkbox"/> orally <input type="checkbox"/> recording device <input type="checkbox"/> written by Informant		
If orally furnished and reduced to writing by Agent: <div>Dictated <u>8/7/67</u> to <u>Betty Lou Watkins</u> Transcribed <u>8/10/67</u> Authenticated by Informant _____</div>		Date of Report 8/2/67 Date(s) of activity August, 1964 - August, 1967
Brief description of activity or material <u>Source advised that the WKKKKOM in Franklin and Adams Counties had not been organized from one and one-half to three years.</u>		File where original is located if not attached <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
Remarks: <p style="text-align: center;"><u>INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE ENCLOSED REPORT, IF USED IN A REPORT BEING PREPARED FOR DISSEMINATION, SHOULD BE SUITABLY PARAPHRASED IN ORDER TO ADEQUATELY PROTECT THE IDENTITY OF THIS INFORMANT.</u></p>		

- 1 -
- 1 - 157-63 (WKKKKOM)
- 1 - 157-574 (WKKKKOM, Adams County)
- 1 - 157-469 (WKKKKOM, Franklin County)
- 1 - 157- (UNSUBS; FREDERICK C. BERGER - VICTIM)
- 1 - 157-6582 (OKKKK)
- ① - 157-8266 (FIRE AT CAP SCHOOL, NATCHEZ, MISS., 8/1/67)

Block Stamp



Natchez, Mississippi
August 2, 1967

FREDERICK C. BERGER:

Source advised he had not heard any information in Klan circles that any harm might come to captioned individual.

WKKKKOM, ADAMS COUNTY:

Source advised that the WKKKKOM in Adams County had not been organized since most of its members defected to the UKA in August, 1964. He stated he had not heard that this unit had met or had any activity since that time.

WKKKKOM - FRANKLIN COUNTY:

Source advised that he heard that Unit Number One and Unit Number Two of the WKKKKOM in Franklin County had not met in at least one to one and one-half years.

FIRE AT CAP SCHOOL, NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI, 8/1/67:

Source advised he had not heard anything about the origin of the fire which occurred at this building.

OKKKK:

Source advised that he did not know the following individuals who reside in Louisiana and reportedly are members of the OKKKK:

DEWEY CLEM CLARK
CONEY B. BRYAN
CHARLES W. WHITE
ORVAL LEE KING

- 1* -

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

VICTOR MC LEAN, 619½ Franklin Street, was contacted and provided the following information.

MC LEAN advised that at approximately 9:30 p.m. on August 1, 1967, his Chihuahua dog started barking and making a ruckus and kept running to the rear of the building. MC LEAN went to the rear door, opened the door, and smelled smoke. MC LEAN then heard a slight ticking sound on the gravel in the yard. MC LEAN stated that this was probably made by his Siamese cat, Ringo, who was in the vicinity of the back yard and back porch. MC LEAN stated that the ticking sound was not loud enough to be made by a person.

MC LEAN then went down into his yard and saw smoke coming out of the ventilation fan of the building at 629 Franklin Street. MC LEAN saw no flame visible, smelled no unusual odor, heard no explosions, and did not see anyone in the vicinity at the time.

MC LEAN then called the Natchez Police Department. Desk Sergeant ERNEST BROWN answered the telephone and MC LEAN informed BROWN that there was a fire at 629 Franklin Street and MC LEAN requested assistance.

First to arrive at the fire scene was Sergeant HALL in a squad car and shortly thereafter, the firemen came.

On 8/3/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 -18
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN
SA GEORGE F. BENZ GFB/blw Date dictated 8/4/67

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

Detective Captain FRANK A. RICKARD, Natchez Police Department, Natchez, Mississippi, made available a copy of his report on the fire which occurred on August 2, 1967, at the Community Action Program (CAP), Natchez, Mississippi.

This report is as follows:

"Officer FAR went to the location at 7:20 a.m., 8/2/67 and started an investigation into the causes of this fire.

"FBI SA M. D. DIVEN, George Benz, John Puddister and John Thomas came to the location and were also investigating this matter.

"I talked to Jessie Parish, the coordinator of this Head Start Project, and he stated that he was in the building until 8:55 p.m. last date working on the books with Secretary Patricia Washington. He stated that they left by the front door and there was nothing unusual when they left.

"According to Parish, the only one who had a key to the warehouse where the fire started was Marvelea Robinson, 728 North Pine Street, who had left the place earlier.

"The fire started in the warehouse either on, under or around a table that was standing against the back partition at the rear of offices numbers four and five. These offices are partitions only eight feet tall with no ceilings.

On 8/3/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-17

by SA GEORGE F. BENZ
SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN MDD/blw Date dictated 8/4/67

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

"I talked to Assistant Fire Chief Billy Nash and he stated that this was positively the location of the start of the fire.

"When the Fire Department got to the scene last night, they found the building locked up and a front glass was knocked out to get in the building. The rear door was locked and barred from the inside and all skylights and louvers were intact.

"The Fire Department started to break into the rear door last night but someone got there with a key and the door was unlocked. After the fire was out, the door was locked and barred back and a guard was at the front door where the glass was knocked out.

"There was no odor to indicate an arson-type fire and at the starting location last afternoon, a nurse, according to Parish, was working at the table folding the blankets, pillow cases, etc. On this table were blankets, pillow cases, pillows, etc. Under the table were grits, sugar, and gallon cans of fruit or jam.

"Fifteen photos were taken of this area. All were numbered and marked as to the direction and location of each.

"The following evidence was gathered: A quantity of melted sugar, a quantity of loose sugar and grits, a piece of a burned blanket, a piece of a burned pillow case, a cut out piece of electric wire and conduct pipe, a wall plug box and a gallon can of the fruit or jam.

"A portion of these seven items will be sent to the Lab in Washington for checking.

JN 157-8266

"A preliminary check of the sugar shows no trace of a combustible of any kind was involved in this fire. Opinion either a cigarette that was not put out or a faulty electrical connection.

"Mr. Herbert Gay stated that last night when he left his place next door, he thought he smelled smoke but also thought it could be the faulty muffler on his car."

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Photographs were made with a Speedgraphic camera at the Community Action Program (CAP) located at 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi. All inside photographs were taken utilizing a coupled flash attachment and number five flashbulbs.

The following photographs were made:

Exposure Number	View or Subject Matter	Lens Speed	Aperture Opening
1	Office room, back room	1/100	F-22
2	Office room ceiling	1/100	F-22
3	Office room, side wall	1/200	F-32
4	Storage room, front wall	1/100	F-22
5	Storage room, front wall	1/100	F-22
6	Small office, desk	1/100	F-22
7	Small office, west wall	1/100	F-22
8	Over-all picture of storage	1/100	F-16

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 -16

by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw Date dictated 8/2/67

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

JN 157-8266

Exposure Number	View of Subject Matter	Lens Speed	Aperture Opening
9	Front Office, back wall	1/100	F-11
10	Front view of build- ing	1/100	F-16
11	Neighborhood view of building	1/100	F-16
12	Back door of build- ing	1/100	F-32
13	Back of building	1/100	F-32
14	Back of building	1/100	F-32
15	Oil and water pools	1/100	F-16
16	West side of build- ing	1/100	F-16

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

Mrs. LOUIS R. (MARJORIE) BARONI, Secretary - Treasurer of Adams - Jefferson Improvement Corporation, 715 Franklin Street, a resident of 503 Monroe Street, Natchez, Mississippi, personally appeared at the Natchez Resident Agency of the FBI. Mrs. BARONI advised as follows.

It was suggested to her by FORREST JOHNSON, an attorney, Three East Franklin Street, Natchez, who is affiliated with Systematic Training and Redevelopment (STAR), that she come to the FBI and advise that VICTOR MC LEAN, 619½ Franklin Street, told JOHNSON that he heard dogs barking and smelled smoke and thereupon heard someone running away from the area of the Community Action Program (CAP) building. Mrs. BARONI stated that she did not know what time MC LEAN made this observation.

Mrs. BARONI further advised that MC LEAN furnished this information to Chief of Police J. T. ROBINSON, Natchez Police Department, who, according to JOHNSON, told MC LEAN to forget about the information.

Mrs. BARONI commented that although she is of the white race, she has been actively interested and engaged in obtaining the civil rights for Negroes in the Natchez area for a number of years. She indicated that there are approximately twenty white people, including herself, who are engaged in the civil rights movement. She commented that during the past three years, there has been an almost miraculous change in regard to equal justice and opportunity for the Negroes in this area.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-15
by SA GEORGE F. BENZ SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN MDD/blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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JN 157-8266

She advised that the only militant Negro organization known to her to be operating in the Natchez area was the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), of which W. D. "BILL" WARE is the leader. She advised that WARE is not a resident of Natchez and she does not know his whereabouts.

Mrs. BARONI stated she had no information indicating that the above mentioned fire was arson.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

MALCOM WHITEHEAD, residence address 117 Catalpa Drive, Natchez, Mississippi, Credit Sales Manager for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, 631 Franklin Street, advised that he left the store at 6:15 p.m. on August 1, 1967.

He did not observe anything unusual at that time, see any strangers in the area, nor did he see any smoke or smell anything unusual.

With regard to several pools of dark colored liquid on the concrete to the rear of the Community Action Program (CAP) building and the Goodyear store, WHITEHEAD advised that he did not observe that substance there on the previous day and had no idea where it came from.

He noted that the liquid appeared to be oily in nature and suggested that it may have come from several lard barrels which were some distance away but he noted that there was no evidence of connecting stains on the concrete indicating this possibility.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-14
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

TROY GUILLORY, residing Wilson's Trailer Park, Post Office Box 163, Vidalia, Louisiana, who is a salesman for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company service store located at 631 Franklin Street, advised as follows.

He left the Goodyear store at approximately 6:15 p.m. after returning from a road trip. He stated that he did not observe any unusual activity and saw no evidence of smoke or fire.

With regard to a dark liquid standing in several pools on the concrete parking area behind the Community Action Program (CAP) building and the Goodyear store, he commented that he had not previously noticed the liquid there and had no idea what caused the presence of the liquid.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-13
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

At 7:45 a.m., the following observations were made at 629 Franklin Street, which was being utilized by the Community Action Program (CAP) even though the front of the building read "John's Bargain Center."

There was evidence that a fire had recently taken place toward the rear and on the left-hand side of the building. A rough sketch of the internal layout of the building made by SA BENZ is attached.

Entrance to the building was made by SA BENZ to the front of the building through a space where a large windowpane had previously been located. The door in the right rear of the building was closed and there was a Yale lock on the inside of the door. A search of the outside of the door showed some recent chopping on the door. A search of the cellar of the building showed no visible means of entry other than the stairs within the building on the right-hand side of the building.

The fire scene centered at an intersection of an eight-foot-high partition. The partition seemed to be made of wood and paper products and was used to divide internal space of the building into what appeared to be conference rooms. The fire had burned through the ceiling. Wiring was completely exposed in the area where the fire had taken place and the wiring was hanging from the burned-out wall partition.

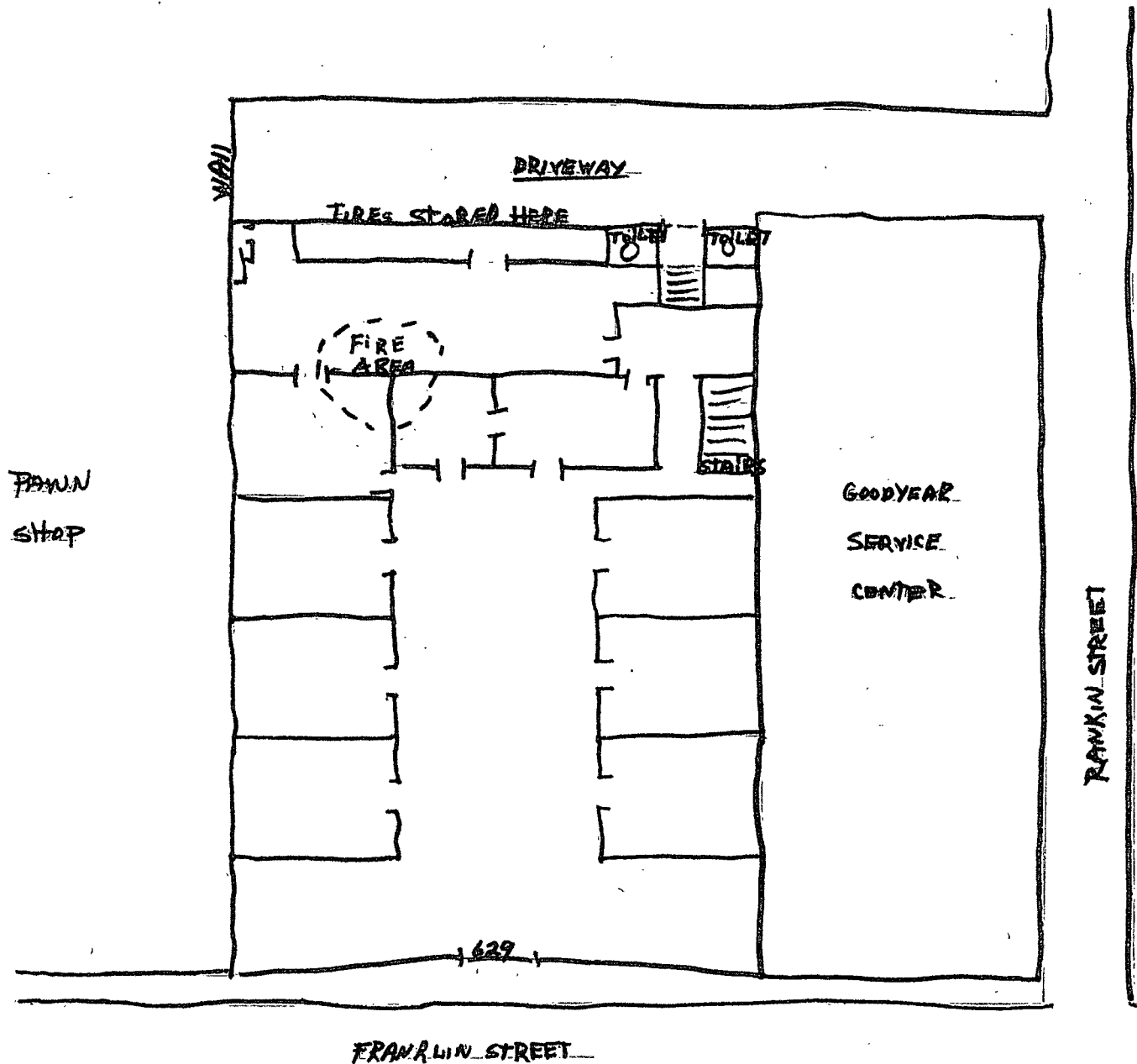
In the immediate vicinity of the fire scene, there were charred cans of food, charred sugar, charred grits, a burned-out chair, burn holes in the table, burn holes in the door, burned cloth, burned linoleum, and some burned papers.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-12

by SA GEORGE F. BENZ /blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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SCENE OF 8/1/67 FIRE
AT 629 FRANKLIN ST.
NATCHEZ, MISS.



NOT TO SCALE
BY SA GEORGE F. BENZ
ON 8/2/67

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Mr. JESSIE PARIS, 27½ Elm Street, Director of the Community Action Program (CAP), advised that on the evening of August 1, 1967, he returned to the office at about 7:00 p.m. and worked in the office with Mrs. PATRICIA WASHINGTON. He said he did not see anything unusual, hear any unusual noises, nor did he smell any smoke indicating a fire anywhere. He said the doors to the premises were locked and the back door had a metal bar across it which secured it further.

Mr. PARIS stated he did not change the door lock when he first moved into the premises and it is, therefore, possible that unauthorized persons may still have a front door key to the premises. He said he did not know anything about the origin of the fire which burned in the building on the evening of August 1, 1967. He said he did not have any suspects in mind and he did not even have the remotest idea of how the fire started.

Mr. PARIS stated the premises is owned by ROBERT LEE WILLIAMS, 433 College Street, Natchez, Mississippi, Director of the Neighborhood Youth Corps, Natchez, Mississippi.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 -11
by SA JOHN WILLIARD THOMAS /jls Date dictated 8/3/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Upon arriving at the scene of the fire at the Community Action Program (CAP) Building, 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, Detective Captain FRANK RICKARD, Natchez Police Department, advised that he had obtained certain materials from the area of the fire which he desired to submit to the FBI Laboratory for examination. He advised that he would take this material to his office in order to properly package the material as well as photograph it and take care of other administrative details, then make the material available to the FBI.

Captain RICKARD stated that he had learned from a witness, HERBERT GAY, of the Gay and Wilson General Merchandise Store located on the west side of the CAP Building, that he smelled smoke at approximately 9:15 p.m. but discounted the odor as possible exhaust fumes from his car.

Detective RICKARD stated that his examination of the burned studs in the partition indicated that the fire had started in the storage area of the building and spread forward into the adjoining offices. He stated it was his opinion, as of that time, that the fire was apparently accidental in nature, caused by human carelessness or electrical failure. He caused a portion of the electrical wiring to be removed for examination by the FBI Laboratory.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-10
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /bls:jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 8/3/67

Mr. PETE GUIDO, 2712-14 Miller Street, Captain of the Adams County Fire Department, Liberty Road and the By-Pass, advised he arrived at the scene of the fire at John's on Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, at about 7:30 AM August 2, 1967. He said Captain FRANK RICKARD, Natchez, Mississippi Police Department, was taking photographs of the interior of the store at that time. He stated the store is owned by ROBERT LEE WILLIAMS.

Mr. GUIDO stated the significance of the rectangular type of hole burned in a picnic type table near the center of the greatest burning, did not indicate anything had been setting on the table other than the telephone, which was melted, because the entire underside of this table was badly burned and if the fire had continued for a little while longer, the entire table top would have burned completely. He noted a typewriter on the other end of the table was beginning to melt, and there were small holes burned in the center of this table. He stated this table is constructed of steel and it has steel supports under the plastic and wood type top which afforded some protection to the top and prevented the fire from burning completely through the top, which left a rectangular type of hole in the top.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 - 9
by SA JOHN WILLIARD THOMAS/jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Upon arriving at the headquarters for the Community Action Program (CAP), 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, it was noticed that a large window was broken from the front of the building and several firemen and personnel of the Natchez Police Department were occupied in various activities in front and inside the building.

Examination of the burned area indicated that the fire had damaged the front wall of the back room and the ceiling above the burned area. It is to be noted that this front wall is merely a partition approximately eight feet tall, not reaching the ceiling by a considerable distance.

Examination of the rear door showed a hasp and padlock in a good and locked condition. The two rear windows, each opening into a separate bathroom, were found to be locked and no evidence of entry was noted.

Inasmuch as the building is bounded on the east side by the Goodyear Store and another store on the west side, no entry was possible since there are neither doors nor windows in either wall.

Examination of the outside of the rear door showed fresh damage to an overlapping wooden strip at the center of the double door. Several pools of a dark colored oily looking liquid were noted in the center of a concrete driveway to the rear of the CAP building.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 - 8A
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw:jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 8/3/67

Mr. BILLY NASH, Assistant Fire Chief, Central Fire Station, Natchez, Mississippi Fire Department, advised records of this department reflect a fire was reported to the department at 9:47 PM, August 1, 1967, to be burning in the John's Building, located on Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, a store type one story building.

Chief NASH stated the fire department immediately dispatched fire fighting apparatus to the scene. Since the front and rear doors were locked, entrance was gained by breaking a large store front window. Flames and smoke were visible from the street and seemed to be coming from the rear of the store. Firemen were dispatched to the rear with instructions to break down the back door; however, as they attempted to break down the locked rear door, a Negro male named CAROL ASHCROFT appeared on the scene with a key.

Chief NASH stated the fire appeared to him to be concentrated in one spot in the rear central portion of the building. The wall had been burned out, as well as the ceiling portion indicating the fire was concentrated in that spot. The remains of the ashes where the fire seemed to have been concentrated indicated it was composed of wood, paper, cloth, and floor tile ashes. There were the charred remains of metal food containers also found in this particular area. The metal cans contained rice, grits, corn meal, and similar type food products. Chief NASH stated he had later been informed by employees in the building that there were also blankets, pillows, face cloths, and similar cloth type items stacked on top of the table in the area where the fire seemed to be concentrated.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 -8

by SA JOHN WILLIARD THOMAS/jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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JN 157-8266

Chief NASH stated he concluded from his examination of the ashes and debris that the fire at first smoldered anywhere from a few minutes to an hour or more before it burst out into flames. He stated nothing was located in the remains of the fire which would indicate to him the presence of any material used in starting fires deliberately.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

Mr. WILLIAM FERRELL, former Sheriff, Adams County, and presently a candidate for Sheriff in Adams County, was interviewed in front of the Community Action Program (CAP) School, 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi. FERRELL advised that he had passed by the school approximately twenty minutes before the fire was reported and that he was accompanied by PRIMO STALLONE. He observed a Negro male and a Negro female working just inside the plate glass windows which are on the front of the building used as a school. FERRELL stated he noted nothing unusual when he first passed by the school.

FERRELL stated that he and STALLONE again passed by the school approximately twenty minutes later after having heard the fire alarms in the City of Natchez. Upon passing the school, they observed smoke coming from the building and saw smoke through the plate glass windows in front of the building. He stated he noticed that there was no one inside the building when he observed the smoke.

FERRELL stated that he and STALLONE immediately stopped their vehicle and upon seeing no forced entry in the front of the building, they ran to the back of the building to determine whether or not there had been any forced entry at the rear of the building. He stated they observed no forced entry at any point and returned to the front of the building, at which time they observed a truck of the Natchez Fire Department stop in front of the building. The firemen proceeded to break a plate glass window in the front of the building adjacent to the front door and entered the building to extinguish the fire.

FERRELL stated other firemen went to the rear of the building and began attempts to force open the rear door. ~~Before the door was forced open, it was opened from the inside~~ and the firemen then entered the building from the rear.

On 8/1/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266 - 7

by SA CLARENCE G. PROSPERE *CLP* /blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

Mr. HERBERT GAY, Owner, Gay and Wilson Merchandise Store, 619 Franklin Street, advised that he had been working in his store up until shortly before the fire was discovered. (The store of Gay and Wilson is adjacent to the building used for the Community Action Program School.) Mr. GAY stated that upon leaving his store and starting his automobile, he smelled smoke and felt that he was possibly having muffler trouble with his automobile. He turned off the motor of his automobile and upon still smelling smoke, he returned to the inside of the store in an effort to determine whether or not there was a fire in his store. Upon coming out of his store, he observed the fire trucks coming to the scene and he then noticed the fire in the adjacent building.

GAY stated that during the course of the evening, he had observed people working in the school and that it was only shortly before the fire was discovered that he noticed the people in the school had apparently left the building.

He stated that at no time during the evening had he observed anyone in the vicinity of the school whom he considered to be suspicious or individuals who would not normally be in this area.

On 8/1/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266-6
by SA CLARENCE G. PROSPERE *CLP* /blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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8/8/67

AIRTEL

AIRMAIL

TO: DIRECTOR, FBI

FROM: SAC, JACKSON (157-8266) (C)

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ, MISS.
AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

Re Jackson teletype to Bureau, 8/2/67.

Enclosed herewith are the original and ten copies
of an LHM dealing with captioned matter.

The Agent referred to in the attached LHM dealing
with the initial investigation in this matter is SA CLARENCE G.
PROSPERE.

Clase

3 - Bureau (Encs. 11) (AM)

1 - Jackson (157-8266)

CGP/blw/clm

(4)

157-8266-5

Searched _____
Serialized *ca* _____
Indexed _____
Filed *ca* _____

Jackson, Mississippi

August 8, 1967

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL,
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
AUGUST 1, 1967
RACIAL MATTERS

At 10:15 p.m. on August 1, 1967, Chief of Police J. T. Robinson, Natchez, Mississippi, Police Department, telephonically contacted an Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and advised that there was a fire at the Community Action Program (CAP) School located at 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi. Chief Robinson stated he had no further details but was proceeding to the fire immediately.

8 - Bureau (AM)
① - Jackson (157-8266) (C)
CGP/blw
(9) *blw*

157-8266-4

Searched	_____
Serialized	<i>ce</i> _____
Indexed	_____
Filed	<i>ce</i> _____

Joe

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

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FERRELL stated other firemen went to the rear of the building and began attempts to force open the rear door. ~~Before the door was forced open, it was opened from the inside~~ and the firemen then entered the building from the rear.

On 8/1/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA CLARENCE G. PROSPERE /blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

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On 8/1/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA CLARENCE G. PROSPERE /blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA JOHN WILLIARD THOMAS/jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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JN 157-8266

Chief NASH stated he concluded from his examination of the ashes and debris that the fire at first smoldered anywhere from a few minutes to an hour or more before it burst out into flames. He stated nothing was located in the remains of the fire which would indicate to him the presence of any material used in starting fires deliberately.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 8/3/67

Mr. PETE GUIDO, 2712-14 Miller Street, Captain of the Adams County Fire Department, Liberty Road and the By-Pass, advised he arrived at the scene of the fire at John's on Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, at about 7:30 AM August 2, 1967. He said Captain FRANK RICKARD, Natchez, Mississippi Police Department, was taking photographs of the interior of the store at that time. He stated the store is owned by ROBERT LEE WILLIAMS.

Mr. GUIDO stated the significance of the rectangular type of hole burned in a picnic type table near the center of the greatest burning, did not indicate anything had been setting on the table other than the telephone, which was melted, because the entire underside of this table was badly burned and if the fire had continued for a little while longer, the entire table top would have burned completely. He noted a typewriter on the other end of the table was beginning to melt, and there were small holes burned in the center of this table. He stated this table is constructed of steel and it has steel supports under the plastic and wood type top which afforded some protection to the top and prevented the fire from burning completely through the top, which left a rectangular type of hole in the top.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266
by SA JOHN WILLIARD THOMAS/jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Mr. JESSIE PARIS, 27½ Elm Street, Director of the Community Action Program (CAP), advised that on the evening of August 1, 1967, he returned to the office at about 7:00 p.m. and worked in the office with Mrs. PATRICIA WASHINGTON. He said he did not see anything unusual, hear any unusual noises, nor did he smell any smoke indicating a fire anywhere. He said the doors to the premises were locked and the back door had a metal bar across it which secured it further.

Mr. PARIS stated he did not change the door lock when he first moved into the premises and it is, therefore, possible that unauthorized persons may still have a front door key to the premises. He said he did not know anything about the origin of the fire which burned in the building on the evening of August 1, 1967. He said he did not have any suspects in mind and he did not even have the remotest idea of how the fire started.

Mr. PARIS stated the premises is owned by ROBERT LEE WILLIAMS, 433 College Street, Natchez, Mississippi, Director of the Neighborhood Youth Corps, Natchez, Mississippi.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266
by SA JOHN WILLIARD THOMAS /jls Date dictated 8/3/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Upon arriving at the scene of the fire at the Community Action Program (CAP) Building, 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, Detective Captain FRANK RICKARD, Natchez Police Department, advised that he had obtained certain materials from the area of the fire which he desired to submit to the FBI Laboratory for examination. He advised that he would take this material to his office in order to properly package the material as well as photograph it and take care of other administrative details, then make the material available to the FBI.

Captain RICKARD stated that he had learned from a witness, HERBERT GAY, of the Gay and Wilson General Merchandise Store located on the west side of the CAP Building, that he smelled smoke at approximately 9:15 p.m. but discounted the odor as possible exhaust fumes from his car.

Detective RICKARD stated that his examination of the burned studs in the partition indicated that the fire had started in the storage area of the building and spread forward into the adjoining offices. He stated it was his opinion, as of that time, that the fire was apparently accidental in nature, caused by human carelessness or electrical failure. He caused a portion of the electrical wiring to be removed for examination by the FBI Laboratory.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /bls:jls Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

Detective Captain FRANK A. RICKARD, Natchez Police Department, Natchez, Mississippi, made available a copy of his report on the fire which occurred on August 2, 1967, at the Community Action Program (CAP), Natchez, Mississippi.

This report is as follows:

"Officer FAR went to the location at 7:20 a.m., 8/2/67 and started an investigation into the causes of this fire.

"FBI SA M. D. DIVEN, George Benz, John Puddister and John Thomas came to the location and were also investigating this matter.

"I talked to Jessie Parish, the coordinator of this Head Start Project, and he stated that he was in the building until 8:55 p.m. last date working on the books with Secretary Patricia Washington. He stated that they left by the front door and there was nothing unusual when they left.

"According to Parish, the only one who had a key to the warehouse where the fire started was Marvelea Robinson, 728 North Pine Street, who had left the place earlier.

"The fire started in the warehouse either on, under or around a table that was standing against the back partition at the rear of offices numbers four and five. These offices are partitions only eight feet tall with no ceilings.

On 8/3/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA GEORGE F. BENZ
SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN MDD/blw Date dictated 8/4/67

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"I talked to Assistant Fire Chief Billy Nash and he stated that this was positively the location of the start of the fire.

"When the Fire Department got to the scene last night, they found the building locked up and a front glass was knocked out to get in the building. The rear door was locked and barred from the inside and all skylights and louvers were intact.

"The Fire Department started to break into the rear door last night but someone got there with a key and the door was unlocked. After the fire was out, the door was locked and barred back and a guard was at the front door where the glass was knocked out.

"There was no odor to indicate an arson-type fire and at the starting location last afternoon, a nurse, according to Parish, was working at the table folding the blankets, pillow cases, etc. On this table were blankets, pillow cases, pillows, etc. Under the table were grits, sugar, and gallon cans of fruit or jam.

"Fifteen photos were taken of this area. All were numbered and marked as to the direction and location of each.

"The following evidence was gathered: A quantity of melted sugar, a quantity of loose sugar and grits, a piece of a burned blanket, a piece of a burned pillow case, a cut out piece of electric wire and conduct pipe, a wall plug box and a gallon can of the fruit or jam.

"A portion of these seven items will be sent to the Lab in Washington for checking.

"A preliminary check of the sugar shows no trace of a combustible of any kind was involved in this fire. Opinion either a cigarette that was not put out or a faulty electrical connection.

"Mr. Herbert Gay stated that last night when he left his place next door, he thought he smelled smoke but also thought it could be the faulty muffler on his car."

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

Upon arriving at the headquarters for the Community Action Program (CAP), 629 Franklin Street, Natchez, Mississippi, it was noticed that a large window was broken from the front of the building and several firemen and personnel of the Natchez Police Department were occupied in various activities in front and inside the building.

Examination of the burned area indicated that the fire had damaged the front wall of the back room and the ceiling above the burned area. It is to be noted that this front wall is merely a partition approximately eight feet tall, not reaching the ceiling by a considerable distance.

Examination of the rear door showed a hasp and padlock in a good and locked condition. The two rear windows, each opening into a separate bathroom, were found to be locked and no evidence of entry was noted.

Inasmuch as the building is bounded on the east side by the Goodyear Store and another store on the west side, no entry was possible since there are neither doors nor windows in either wall.

Examination of the outside of the rear door showed fresh damage to an overlapping wooden strip at the center of the double door. Several pools of a dark colored oily looking liquid were noted in the center of a concrete driveway to the rear of the CAP building.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw:jls Date dictated 8/2/67

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

At 7:45 a.m., the following observations were made at 629 Franklin Street, which was being utilized by the Community Action Program (CAP) even though the front of the building read "John's Bargain Center."

There was evidence that a fire had recently taken place toward the rear and on the left-hand side of the building. A rough sketch of the internal layout of the building made by SA BENZ is attached.

Entrance to the building was made by SA BENZ to the front of the building through a space where a large windowpane had previously been located. The door in the right rear of the building was closed and there was a Yale lock on the inside of the door. A search of the outside of the door showed some recent chopping on the door. A search of the cellar of the building showed no visible means of entry other than the stairs within the building on the right-hand side of the building.

The fire scene centered at an intersection of an eight-foot-high partition. The partition seemed to be made of wood and paper products and was used to divide internal space of the building into what appeared to be conference rooms. The fire had burned through the ceiling. Wiring was completely exposed in the area where the fire had taken place and the wiring was hanging from the burned-out wall partition.

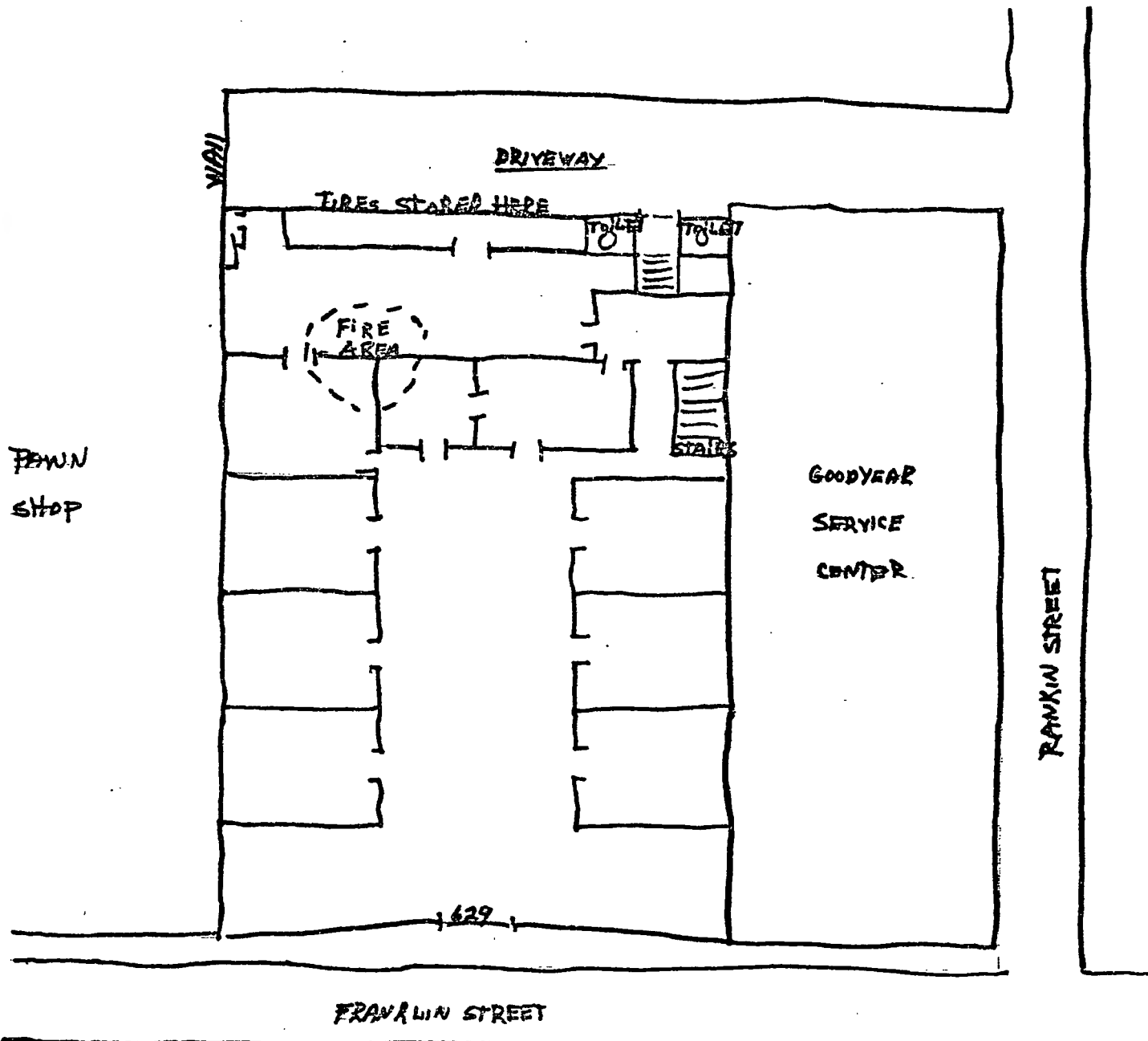
In the immediate vicinity of the fire scene, there were charred cans of food, charred sugar, charred grits, a burned-out chair, burn holes in the table, burn holes in the door, burned cloth, burned linoleum, and some burned papers.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA GEORGE F. BENZ /blw Date dictated 8/3/67

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SCENE OF 8/1/67 FIRE
AT 629 FRANKLIN ST.
NATCHEZ, MISS.



14

NOT TO SCALE
BY SA GEORGE F. BENZ
ON 8/2/67

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

TROY GUILLORY, residing Wilson's Trailer Park, Post Office Box 163, Vidalia, Louisiana, who is a salesman for the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company service store located at 631 Franklin Street, advised as follows.

He left the Goodyear store at approximately 6:15 p.m. after returning from a road trip. He stated that he did not observe any unusual activity and saw no evidence of smoke or fire.

With regard to a dark liquid standing in several pools on the concrete parking area behind the Community Action Program (CAP) building and the Goodyear store, he commented that he had not previously noticed the liquid there and had no idea what caused the presence of the liquid.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8265
by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 3, 1967

MALCOM WHITEHEAD, residence address 117 Catalpa Drive, Natchez, Mississippi, Credit Sales Manager for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, 631 Franklin Street, advised that he left the store at 6:15 p.m. on August 1, 1967.

He did not observe anything unusual at that time, see any strangers in the area, nor did he see any smoke or smell anything unusual.

With regard to several pools of dark colored liquid on the concrete to the rear of the Community Action Program (CAP) building and the Goodyear store, WHITEHEAD advised that he did not observe that substance there on the previous day and had no idea where it came from.

He noted that the liquid appeared to be oily in nature and suggested that it may have come from several lard barrels which were some distance away but he noted that there was no evidence of connecting stains on the concrete indicating this possibility.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN /blw Date dictated 8/2/67

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

Mrs. LOUIS R. (MARJORIE) BARONI, Secretary - Treasurer of Adams - Jefferson Improvement Corporation, 715 Franklin Street, a resident of 503 Monroe Street, Natchez, Mississippi, personally appeared at the Natchez Resident Agency of the FBI. Mrs. BARONI advised as follows.

It was suggested to her by FORREST JOHNSON, an attorney, Three East Franklin Street, Natchez, who is affiliated with Systematic Training and Redevelopment (STAR), that she come to the FBI and advise that VICTOR MC LEAN, 619½ Franklin Street, told JOHNSON that he heard dogs barking and smelled smoke and thereupon heard someone running away from the area of the Community Action Program (CAP) building. Mrs. BARONI stated that she did not know what time MC LEAN made this observation.

Mrs. BARONI further advised that MC LEAN furnished this information to Chief of Police J. T. ROBINSON, Natchez Police Department, who, according to JOHNSON, told MC LEAN to forget about the information.

Mrs. BARONI commented that although she is of the white race, she has been actively interested and engaged in obtaining the civil rights for Negroes in the Natchez area for a number of years. She indicated that there are approximately twenty white people, including herself, who are engaged in the civil rights movement. She commented that during the past three years, there has been an almost miraculous change in regard to equal justice and opportunity for the Negroes in this area.

On 8/2/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

by SA GEORGE F. BENZ
SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN MDD/blw Date dictated 8/3/67

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

JN 157-8266

She advised that the only militant Negro organization known to her to be operating in the Natchez area was the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), of which W. D. "BILL" WARE is the leader. She advised that WARE is not a resident of Natchez and she does not know his whereabouts.

Mrs. BARONI stated she had no information indicating that the above mentioned fire was arson.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date August 4, 1967

VICTOR MC LEAN, 619½ Franklin Street, was contacted and provided the following information.

MC LEAN advised that at approximately 9:30 p.m. on August 1, 1967, his Chihuahua dog started barking and making a ruckus and kept running to the rear of the building. MC LEAN went to the rear door, opened the door, and smelled smoke. MC LEAN then heard a slight ticking sound on the gravel in the yard. MC LEAN stated that this was probably made by his Siamese cat, Ringo, who was in the vicinity of the back yard and back porch. MC LEAN stated that the ticking sound was not loud enough to be made by a person.

MC LEAN then went down into his yard and saw smoke coming out of the ventilation fan of the building at 629 Franklin Street. MC LEAN saw no flame visible, smelled no unusual odor, heard no explosions, and did not see anyone in the vicinity at the time.

MC LEAN then called the Natchez Police Department. Desk Sergeant ERNEST BROWN answered the telephone and MC LEAN informed BROWN that there was a fire at 629 Franklin Street and MC LEAN requested assistance.

First to arrive at the fire scene was Sergeant HALL in a squad car and shortly thereafter, the firemen came.

On 8/3/67 at Natchez, Mississippi File # Jackson 157-8266

SA MERRIMAN D. DIVEN

by SA GEORGE F. BENZ GFB/blw Date dictated 8/4/67

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

**FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
PROGRAM SCHOOL,
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI
AUGUST 1, 1967**

Photographs were taken of the building following the fire at the Community Action Program School, Natchez, Mississippi, and these photographs are being retained in the Jackson Division.

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.



REPORT
of theFEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
WASHINGTON, D. C.

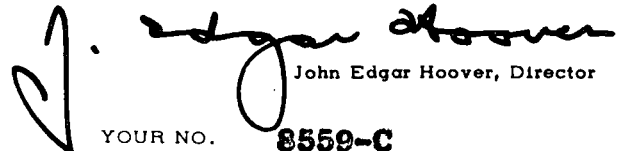
August 10, 1967

To: Mr. J. T. Robinson
Chief of Police
Natchez, Mississippi 39121

Attention: Detective Captain F. A. Rickard

This examination has been made with the understanding that the evidence is connected with an official investigation of a criminal matter and that the Laboratory report will be used for official purposes only, related to the investigation or a subsequent criminal prosecution. Authorization cannot be granted for the use of the Laboratory report in connection with a civil proceeding.

Re: UNKNOWN SUBJECT;
HEAD START BUILDING;
POSSIBLE ARSON


John Edgar Hoover, Director

YOUR NO. 8559-C
FBI FILE NO.
LAB. NO. PC-A635 LN

Examination requested by: Addressee
Reference: Letter 8/2/67
Examination requested: Chemical Analyses
Specimens:

- Q1 Sugar
- Q2 Sugar and grits
- Q3 Piece of blanket
- Q4 Piece of pillowcase
- Q5 Conduit pipe and wire
- Q6 Electrical outlet with wire

Results of examination:

Specimens Q1 through Q6 were examined for the presence of flammable accelerants, but none were found.

Specimens Q1 through Q6 are being returned to you under separate cover by registered mail.

1 - Jackson (with copy of incoming)

157-8266-3

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
AUG 11 1967	
FBI - JACKSON	

PROSPECT
Purdister

CRIMINAL REPORT

Complainant Unknown

Case No. 8559-0

Address _____

Phone _____

Offense Fire

Place of Occurrence 627 Franklin St

Report received by _____ at 9:40P M. Date 8/7/67 19____ How reported Ph

Date and time offense committed Same

Officer Assigned Car #4 & Det Robert PAR

Time of investigation 7:20AM M. Date 8/2/67 PAR

Suspects and/or persons arrested _____

DETAILS OF OFFENSE (State fully all other circumstances of this offense and its investigation)

Officer PAR went to the location at 7:20AM 8/2/67 and started an investigation into the Causes of this fire.

ELL S.A M D Diven, Geo Benz, John Fuddoster & John Thomas came to the location and were also investigating this matter.

I talked to Jessie Parish the coordinator of this Head Start Project and he stated that he was in the Building until 8:35PM last date working on the Deck with the Sect Patricia Washington. He stated that they left by the front door and there was nothing UNUSUAL when they left.

According to Parish the only one who had a key to the warehouse where the fire started was Harvella Robinson 728 So Pine St who had left the place earlier.

The fire started in the warehouse either on, under or around a table that was standing against the back partition at the rear of offices #3 & 25. These offices are partitions only 8' tall with no ceiling.

I talked to Asst Fire Chief Billy Nash and he stated that this was positively the location of the start of the fire.

When the Fire Dept got to the scene last nite they found the Bldg locked up and a front glass was knocked out to get in the Bldg. The rear door was locked and bared from the inside and all skylights & Lovers were intact.

The fire Dept started to break into the Rear Door last night but someone got there with a key and the door was unlocked. After the fire was out the door was locked and bared back and a guard was at the front door where the glass was knocked out.

There was no odor to indicate an arson type fire and at the starting location last afternoon a Nurse according to Parish was working at the table folding the box blankets Pillow Cases etc. On this table were blankets, Pillow Cases, Pillows Etc under the table were grits Sugar and gallon cans of fruit or jam.

15 Photo were taken of this area. all were numbered and marked as to the direction and location of each.

The following evidenc was gathered. A Quantity of melted sugar, a quantity of loose sugar & Grits, a Piece of a burned blanket, a piece of a burned pillow case a cut out piece of elect wire & Conduct pipe, a Wall plug box and a gallon can of the fruit or jam.

A Portion of these seven items will be sent to the Lab in Wash for checking. A Preliminary check of the sugar shows no trace of a combustible of and kind was involved in this fire. Opinion either a cig that was not put out or a faulty elect connection.

Re Herbert Gay stated that last night when he left his place next door he thought he smelled smoke but also thought it could be the faulty muffler on his car.

REPORT MADE BY PAR

SEARCHED	INDEXED
SERIALIZED	FILED
AUG 11 1967	
FBI JACKSON	

PROSPERE 8559-8266-2

NATCHES POLICE DEPARTMENT

POST OFFICE BOX 144 • NATCHES, MISSISSIPPI 39121 • PHONE 642-2566 AREA CODE 601

TO: Hon J Edgar Hoover Director FBI
 Wash D C
 Attn FBI Lab
 8/2/67 FBI Case # 8550-G Fire at
 Lead Start Bldg 627 Franklin St
 Natches Miss

DATE: Dear Sir:
 On the Night of 8/1/67 the Bldg
 containing the Lead Start Program
 caught fire and there was considerable
 damage.

Although there was not an apparent
 arson in the case a full investigation
 is under way at this time.

The attached package contains 6 items
 #1 assorted pieces of super EXTRA
EXTRA

#2 A portion of loose wire & fringe

#3 A piece of burned black

#4 A piece of burned plastic

#5 A section of elect black pipe
 and wire

#6 A elect wall outlet with plastic

These items are being submitted to ascertain
 if there is any evidence of arson.

This material will not be examined by
 any other crime Lab.

Yours Truly
 J T Robinson Chief

SIGNED

RECIPIENT OF THIS COPY RETURN WHITE COPY TO SENDER

OFFICE COPY

FBI WASH DC

FBI JACK MISS

1225AM DEFERRED 8-2-67 JKK

TO DIRECTOR

FROM JACKSON (157-120)

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (CAP) SCHOOL, WATCHEZ, MISS.,
AUGUST ONE LAST. RE:

AT APPROXIMATELY TEN P. MIGHT ONE LAST FIRE DISCOVERED IN
COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (CAP) SCHOOL, AN ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM,
WATCHEZ, MISS.,

JESSIE PARIS, W/O, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL, HAD LEFT BUILDING
FIFTEEN MINUTES PRIOR TO DISCOVERY OF FIRE.

FIRE EXTINGUISHED BY WATCHEZ FD. ESTIMATED DAMAGE SOME HUNDREDS
DOLLARS. FIRE ORIGINATED IN STORAGE AREA WHERE CLEANING SUPPLIES
KEPT. NO EVIDENCE FORCED ENTRY. NO EVIDENCE INCENDIARY DEVICE.

BUILDING SECURED BY PD FOR NIGHT. FURTHER INSPECTION WILL BE
CONDUCTED DAYLIGHT HOURS.

STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES BEING ADVISED.

ELD.

DEL.

FBI WASH DC

P

TGP/jkk

approved. *[Signature]* sent *1225* per *[Signature]*

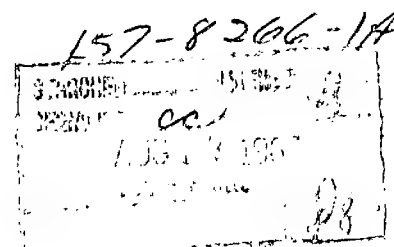
00: JN
157 - new
Prospero
157 - 8266 - 1
Tick 8/8 88
Searched _____
Serialized _____
Indexed _____
Filed _____

FIRE AT COMMUNITY ACTION
(Title) PROGRAM SCHOOL, NATCHEZ, MISS

(File No.) 157-8266-1A

1. 8/17/67 Copy of P. D. fire investigation report re O.E.O. 8/2/67.
2. 8/17/67 14 color photos of scene of fire at CAP, Franklin St., Natchez, Miss., 8/1/67.
3. 8/17/67 10 contact prints and 15 negatives of scene of fire at CAP office, Natchez.

Disposition:

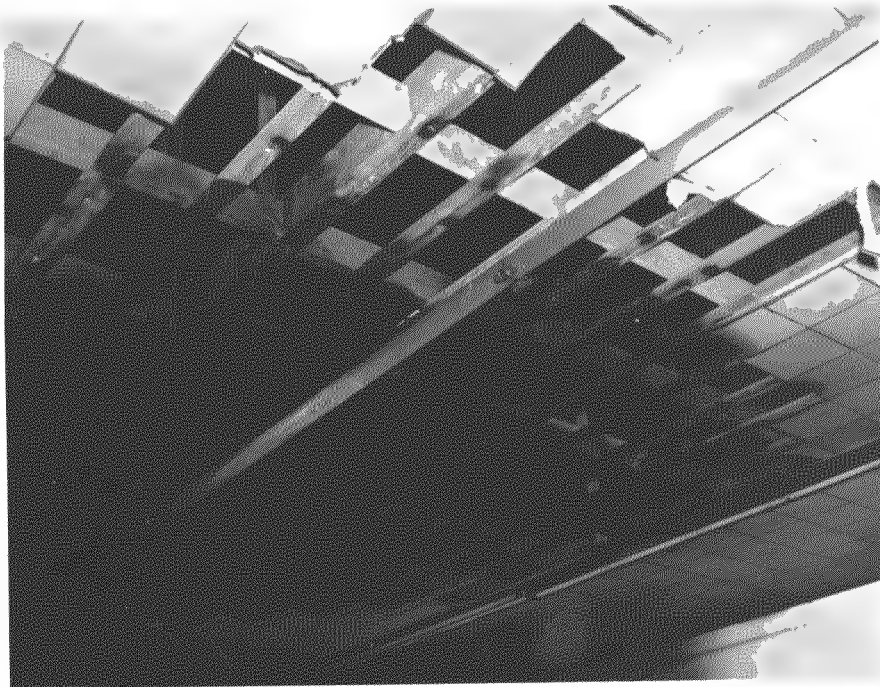


File No. JN 157-8266-1A3Date Received 8-2-67From _____
(NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR)_____
(ADDRESS OF CONTRIBUTOR)_____
(CITY AND STATE)By Merriman D. Dunes
(NAME OF SPECIAL AGENT)
(New Orleans)To Be Returned ☐ Yes
☒ NoReceipt given ☐ Yes
☒ No

Description:

10 contact Prints &
15 negatives of
scene of fire
COP office, Matchez

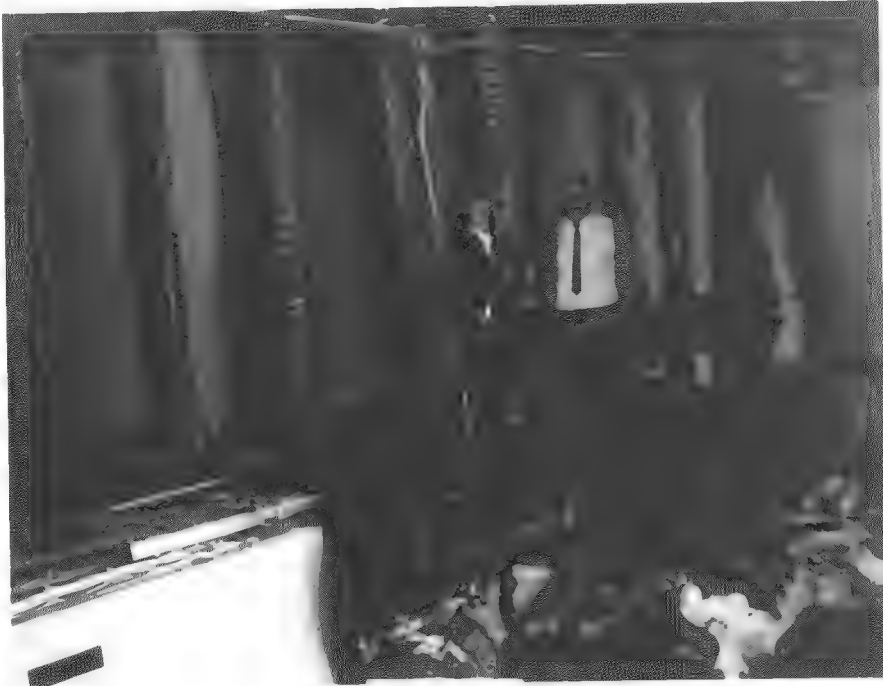
157-8266-1A3



157-8266-1A3



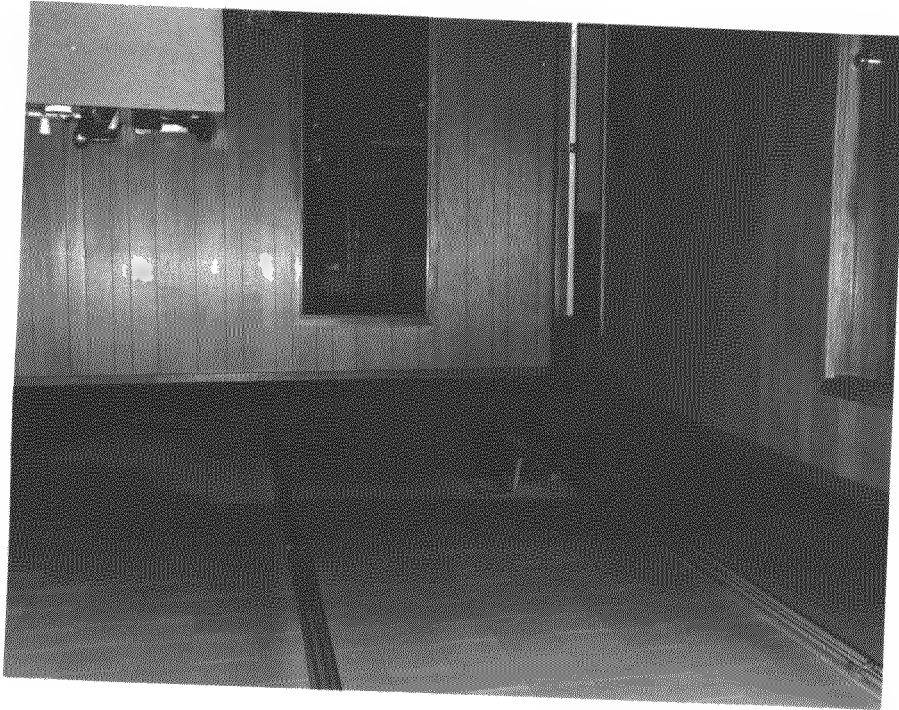
157-8266-1A3



157-8266-1A3



157-8266-1A3



File No. In 157-8266-1A2Date Received 8-1-67From _____
(NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR)_____
(ADDRESS OF CONTRIBUTOR)_____
(CITY AND STATE)
By SA John L. Fuddister
(NAME OF SPECIAL AGENT)To Be Returned ☐ Yes
☒ NoReceipt given ☐ Yes
☒ No

Description:

14 color photos of
scene of fire at
CAP Franklin St.
Natchez, Miss., 8/1/67

The Picture Taker's Friend

NATCHEZ PHOTO CO.

412 MAIN STREET NATCHEZ, MISS.

PHONE 445-4852

NO.

10248

DATE

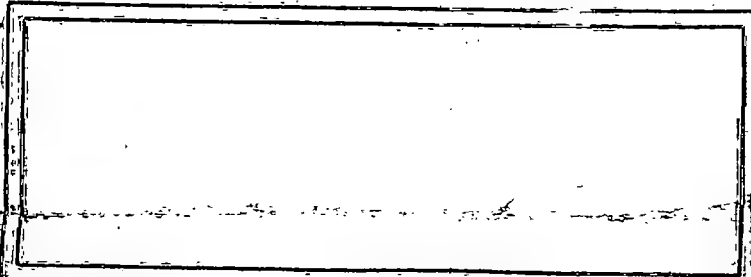
8/3/67

NAME

F.B. Q

ADDRESS

PHONE NO.



ENCLOSURES	ORDERED	PRICE
ROLLS #X5	DEVELOPING PRINT OF EACH	1.50
NEGATIVES	PRINT OF EACH	1.56
EKTACHROME	PRINT OF EACH	2.03
KODACHROME	PRINT OF EACH	2.03
ANSCOCHROME	SLIDES OF EACH	2.59
SPECIAL INSTRUCTION		TAX
		TOTAL \$

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AUG • 67



AUG • 67



AUG • 67



AUG • 67



AUG • 67



AUG • 67



AUG • 67

File No. JN 157 - 8266-1A1Date Received 8/3/67From DET. CAPT. FRANK A. PICKARD
(NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR)NATCHEZ, MISS. P.D.
(ADDRESS OF CONTRIBUTOR)

(CITY AND STATE)

By SA G. F. BENZ &
(NAME OF SPECIAL AGENT)
MERRIMON D. DIVENTo Be Returned ☐ Yes☒ NoReceipt given ☐ Yes☒ No

Description:

copy of P. D. file
investigation report re
OEO. 8/2/67.

OFFENSE REPORT

Complainant Unknown

Case No. 8559-C

Address _____

Phone _____

Offense: Fire

Place of Occurrence: 627 Franklin St

Report received by _____ at 9:40P M. Date 8/1/67 19____ How reported Ph

Date and time offense committed Same Officer Assigned Car #4 & Det Bureau FAR

Time of investigation 7:20AM M. Date 8/2/67 FAR

Suspects and/or persons arrested _____

DETAILS OF OFFENSE (State fully all other circumstances of this offense and its investigation)

Officer FAR went to the location at 7:20AM 8/2/67 and started an investigation into the Causes of this fire.

FBI S.A M D Diven, Geo Benz, John Puddester & John Thomas came to the location and were also investigating this matter.

I talked to Jessie Parish the coordinator of this Head Start Project and he stated that he was in the Building until 3:55PM last date working on the books with the Sect Patricia Washington. He stated that they left by the front door and there was nothing ~~unusual~~ Unusual when they left.

According to Parish the only one who had a key to the warehouse where the fire started was Marvela Robinson 728 No Pine St who had left the place earlier.

The fire started in the warehouse either on, under or around a table that was standing against the back partition at the rear of offices #s 4&5

These offices are partitions only 8' tall with no ceiling.

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A Premiliary check of the sugar shows no trace of a combustibile of and king was involved in this fire. Opinion either a cig that was not put out or a faulty elect connection.

Mr Herbert Gay stated that last night when he left his place next door he thought he smelled smoke but also thought it could be the faulty muffler on his car.

REPORT MADE BY 

Date 8/2/67